

Union Street Study Background

Relevant Recommendations in the Approved Waterfront Small Area Plan

- *A Transportation Management Plan that comprehensively addresses parking, motor coach, freight loading, and other impacts along the Union Street corridor should be completed prior to approval of any new development.*
- *Enlarge the pedestrian hub at King and Union Streets by closing the unit block to most vehicular traffic, maintaining police, fire, EMS, and delivery, trolley and motor coach access as necessary. Creating a significant public space will to give pedestrians more room to congregate, and allow them a sense of where they are in relation to other points of interest along the waterfront. Consider eliminating on-street parking along the unit block of King and at the immediate intersection of King and Union Street.*
- *Create a comfortable pedestrian-focused zone along The Strand from King Street to Point Lumley, limiting vehicular access where possible. Open alleyways and other east-west links between Union Street and the river.*
- *Provide improved signage for bicyclists to improve safety and help delineate the urban section of the Mount Vernon Trail between Bashford Lane and Green Street. Encourage through traffic to use Royal Street as a preferred route through Old Town.*
- *Apply and enforce on and off road bicycle laws to help improve bicycle safety and minimize pedestrian and bicycle conflicts and vehicular and bicycle conflicts as recommended in the 2008 Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan. The City should proactively explore and implement urban design approaches that help minimize these conflicts.*
- *As Plan implementation affects motor coach parking needs and locations, study and identify motor coach drop off and parking locations that are not in conflict with public or private facilities on Union Street. Include potential increase in motor coach traffic in the Union Street traffic study.*
- *The City will pursue early phasing elements outlined in the Plan with immediate attention on predevelopment activities such as tracking, reporting and managing parking; completion of City acquisition of The Strand properties and technical analysis work to convert it to parkland; addressing failing bulkheads; completion of the Union Street study; preparation of CIP the next phase of design and engineering for flood mitigation; pursuing reuse of The Beachcombers Restaurant; completing ODBC negotiations; working with Art and History commissions on early phases of their plans; completing an engineering and permitting plan; and others such as an analysis for a new civic building with a related spatial needs assessment for the Archaeological museum; updating settlement agreements; development of a grants strategy; etc.*

Waterfront Plan Work Group Discussion of Union Street Study

Principle or “Plan Statement” on the Union Street Study

“Conduct a study of traffic and circulation on Union Street, including how it functions for users of all modes of travel.” Agreed: Rhodeside, Wood, Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ballard, Ely.

Proposed amendment to include Gibbon Street to Union Street Study failed.

Agreed: Rhodeside, Wood, Ely.

Disagreed: Olinger, Macek, Lyle, Ballard.

Note: Those opposing adding Gibbon Street to this statement noted, among other issues, that Gibbon Street is more of a regional commuting issue than a waterfront issue; also, it is not the only additional street traffic that might be affected by a plan.

Discussion of Union Street Study in the Waterfront Plan Work Group Report

“Union Street traffic impacts must be understood. The Work Group strongly recommends that the City complete a transportation management study along the Union Street corridor and adjacent Old Town streets. The Work Group envisions that Union Street will be a pedestrian-friendly corridor with additional street-level retail south of King Street and near Robinson Terminal North. The Work Group anticipates new pedestrian activities within a pedestrian zone at the end of King Street, which is already a congested intersection. At the same time, additional development in the vicinity of the waterfront will create new demands on the transportation network, including increased vehicular traffic; commercial deliveries; bicycles; taxis, motor coaches, and shuttle buses; and parking. With these new demands and anticipated requirements and a finite capacity of the existing traffic grid, and the City needs to use innovative methods to manage and control this finite capacity, including through the Special Use Permit (SUP) process, to help mitigate the impacts on the community. A Union Street transportation management study will provide the data and planning guidance necessary to alleviate transportation impacts, and should be completed prior to approval of any new development on the waterfront. Some in the Work Group feel that this is so critical that Plan adoption should not proceed before this study is completed.”

Discussion of Issues to be Addressed/Informed by a Union Street Study

Work Group members discussed the following text from the Draft Waterfront Plan: *“Using pedestrian counters at strategic locations along the waterfront and frequent monitoring and tracking of the counts to enable adjustments when necessary to strategies designed to address pedestrian congestion.”* There was no consensus on this recommendation, in part because there was a lack of agreement about “pedestrian congestion” as a valid issue. Work Group comments included:

- The key to reducing pedestrian congestion, such as at King and Union, is not overloading the waterfront with traffic-generating development (Ely).

- Pedestrian congestion is not a valid issue (Rhodeside).
- The Union Street congestion problem is related to traffic, not pedestrians, and a Union Street study will help with this. (Lyle).
- Consider how to reflect that pedestrian and patron vibrancy does not overwhelm capacity. Counters should be carefully positioned, not forgetting that Union Street is probably more constricted on the south end now because of the Windmill Hill Park Plan (Wood).

On a recommendation related to pedestrian safety improvements, Work Group comments included:

- An alternative is not to approve property developments that will increase sidewalk congestion at key intersections and times that already are oversaturated with people (Ely).
- Conduct a pedestrian/bicycle/traffic study at heavily used intersections (Lyle).
- Implement pedestrian safety improvements at high-conflict intersections (Rhodeside). Traffic moving down Franklin to the river from Route 1 (the most likely arterial route) must proceed north on Union through Windmill Hill Park. This whole stretch of Union is the primary route for bicycles moving from Jones Point to locations north. Pedestrian and bicyclist hazards must be mitigated (Wood)

On a recommendation related to resolving conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists on Union Street:

- We need to discuss the use of bikes on Union Street (Ballard).
- The challenge is getting the police to enforce traffic laws against bicyclists. Need measures that remind bicyclists to respect traffic regulations (Ely).
- Encourage measures that can divert more use to Royal Street (Macek).
- Strongly recommends that the City develop ways to encourage bicyclists to use routes other than Union Street and Royal Street to the greatest extent possible (Olinger).
- The goal should be to design bike paths, pedestrian routes, and auto routes to eliminate conflicts. The report should highlight opportunities to incorporate in the waterfront good design to minimize conflicts between pedestrians, vehicles and bicyclists (Wood).

On a recommendation to "Explore improved bicycle facilities on North Union Street and North Royal Street, as recommended in the 2008 Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility Plan," the Work Group expressed general agreement in support with recognition that there should be more attention given to The Strand area, along with North Union Street and North Royal Street.

There was discussion of the long term potential need for additional transit options, including some discussion of north-south transit, such as a Union Street Trolley, but no recommendation.